

**In the Claims**

1. (Currently Amended) ~~An~~ A computer-implemented electronic commerce system comprising ~~a server operating on one or more computers and~~ computer systems each comprising one or more processing units and one or more memory units, the one or more computer systems collectively operable to:

communicate a search query for one or more products to one or more seller databases that contain product data, each seller database operable to generate local search results responsive to the search query;

communicate one or more sorting parameters to the seller databases, the sorting parameters directing each seller database to sort the local search results generated at each seller database in response to the search query such that the sorted local search results are pre-sorted prior to being communicated to the one or more computer systems;

receive sorted local search results from one or more of the seller databases, the sorted local search results having been pre-sorted by the one or more seller databases prior to being communicated to the one or more computer systems;

if the received sorted local search results comprise sorted local search results received from more than one of the seller databases:

merge the sorted local search results received from the seller databases to generate merged search results;

sort the merged search results according to the sorting parameters; and

communicate the sorted merged search results to a user; and

if the received sorted local search results comprise sorted local search results received from a single one of the seller databases, communicate the sorted local search results received from the single one of the seller databases to a user.

2. (Currently Amended) The system of Claim 1, wherein the sorting parameters further direct each seller database to initially communicate no more than a specified number of sorted local search results in response to the search query and direct the ~~server~~ one or more computer systems to initially communicate no more than the specified number of merged search results to the user.

3. (Currently Amended) The system of Claim 2, wherein the ~~server is~~ one or more computer systems are further operable to:

initially communicate no more than the specified number of sorted merged search results to the user;

receive a request for additional search results from the user;

determine that all of the sorted merged search results have been communicated to the user;

request additional sorted local search results from the seller databases;

receive no more than the specified number of additional sorted local search results from one or more of the seller databases, the sorting parameters directing that each seller database communicate no more than the specified number of sorted local search results at a time;

merge the additional sorted local search results received from the seller databases to generate additional merged search results;

sort the additional merged search results according to the sorting parameters; and

communicate the additional sorted merged search results to the user.

4. (Original) The system of Claim 2, wherein the number of merged search results is less than or equal to the product of the specified number and the number of seller databases to which the search query is communicated.

5. (Currently Amended) The system of Claim 1, wherein the ~~server is~~ one or more computer systems are further operable to:

receive a request from the user for a specified number of search results to be initially communicated to the user; and

initially communicate no more than the specified number of sorted merged search results to the user.

6. (Currently Amended) The system of Claim 5, wherein the ~~server is~~ one or more computer systems are further operable to communicate a sorting parameter directing each seller database to initially communicate no more than the specified number of sorted local search results in response to the search query.

7. (Original) The system of Claim 1, wherein the sorting parameters are selected from the group consisting of product attributes, product attribute values, seller attributes, and seller attribute values.

8. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for processing search results in an electronic commerce system, the method performed using one or more computer systems each comprising one or more processing units and one or more memory units, the method comprising:

using the one or more computer systems, communicating a search query for one or more products to one or more seller databases that contain product data, each seller database operable to generate local search results responsive to the search query;

using the one or more computer systems, communicating one or more sorting parameters to the seller databases, the sorting parameters directing each seller database to sort the local search results generated at each seller database in response to the search query such that the sorted local search results are pre-sorted prior to being communicated from each seller database;

using the one or more computer systems, receiving sorted local search results from one or more of the seller databases, the sorted local search results having been pre-sorted by the one or more seller databases prior to being communicated to the one or more computer systems;

if the received sorted local search results comprise sorted local search results received from more than one of the seller databases:

using the one or more computer systems, merging the sorted local search results received from the seller databases to generate merged search results;

using the one or more computer systems, sorting the merged search results according to the sorting parameters; and

using the one or more computer systems, communicating the sorted merged search results to a user; and

if the received sorted local search results comprise sorted local search results received from a single one of the seller databases, communicate the sorted local search results received from the single one of the seller databases to a user.

9. (Original) The method of Claim 8, wherein the sorting parameters further direct each seller database to initially communicate no more than a specified number of sorted local search results in response to the search query and direct that no more than the specified number of merged search results to be initially communicated to the user.

10. (Original) The method of Claim 9, further comprising:  
initially communicating no more than the specified number of sorted merged search results to the user;  
receiving a request for additional search results from the user;  
determining that all of the sorted merged search results have been communicated to the user;  
requesting additional sorted local search results from the seller databases;  
receiving no more than the specified number of additional sorted local search results from one or more of the seller databases, the sorting parameters directing that each seller database communicate no more than the specified number of sorted local search results at a time;  
merging the additional sorted local search results received from the seller databases to generate additional merged search results;  
sorting the additional merged search results according to the sorting parameters; and  
communicating the additional sorted merged search results to the user.

11. (Original) The method of Claim 9, wherein the number of merged search results is less than or equal to the product of the specified number and the number of seller databases to which the search query is communicated.

12. (Original) The method of Claim 8, further comprising:  
receiving a request from the user for a specified number of search results to be initially communicated to the user; and  
initially communicating no more than the specified number of sorted merged search results to the user.

13. (Original) The method of Claim 12, further comprising communicating a sorting parameter directing each seller database to initially communicate no more than the specified number of sorted local search results in response to the search query.

14. (Original) The method of Claim 8, wherein the sorting parameters are selected from the group consisting of product attributes, product attribute values, seller attributes, and seller attribute values.

15. (Original) Software for processing search results in an electronic commerce system, the software embodied in a computer-readable medium and when executed operable to:

communicate a search query for one or more products to one or more seller databases that contain product data, each seller database operable to generate local search results responsive to the search query;

communicate one or more sorting parameters to the seller databases, the sorting parameters directing each seller database to sort the local search results generated at each seller database in response to the search query such that the sorted local search results are pre-sorted prior to being communicated to the one or more computer systems;

receive sorted local search results from one or more of the seller databases, the sorted local search results having been pre-sorted by the one or more seller databases prior to being communicated from each seller database;

if the received sorted local search results comprise sorted local search results received from more than one of the seller databases:

merge the sorted local search results received from the seller databases to generate merged search results;

sort the merged search results according to the sorting parameters; and

communicate the sorted merged search results to a user; and

if the received sorted local search results comprise sorted local search results received from a single one of the seller databases, communicate the sorted local search results received from the single one of the seller databases to a user.

16. (Original) The software of Claim 15, wherein the sorting parameters further direct each seller database to initially communicate no more than a specified number of sorted local search results in response to the search query and direct that no more than the specified number of merged search results to be initially communicated to the user.

17. (Original) The software of Claim 16, further operable to:  
initially communicate no more than the specified number of sorted merged search results to the user;  
receive a request for additional search results from the user;  
determine that all of the sorted merged search results have been communicated to the user;  
request additional sorted local search results from the seller databases;  
receive no more than the specified number of additional sorted local search results from one or more of the seller databases, the sorting parameters directing that each seller database communicate no more than the specified number of sorted local search results at a time;  
merge the additional sorted local search results received from the seller databases to generate additional merged search results;  
sort the additional merged search results according to the sorting parameters; and  
communicate the additional sorted merged search results to the user.

18. (Original) The software of Claim 16, wherein the number of merged search results is less than or equal to the product of the specified number and the number of seller databases to which the search query is communicated.

19. (Original) The software of Claim 15, further operable to:  
receive a request from the user for a specified number of search results to be initially communicated to the user; and  
initially communicate no more than the specified number of sorted merged search results to the user.

20. (Original) The software of Claim 19, further operable to communicate a sorting parameter directing each seller database to initially communicate no more than the specified number of sorted local search results in response to the search query.

21. (Original) The software of Claim 15, wherein the sorting parameters are selected from the group consisting of product attributes, product attribute values, seller attributes, and seller attribute values.

22. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented system for processing search results in an electronic commerce system, comprising:

computer-implemented means ~~for~~ for communicating a search query for one or more products to one or more seller databases that contain product data, each seller database operable to generate local search results responsive to the search query;

computer-implemented means for communicating one or more sorting parameters to the seller databases, the sorting parameters directing each seller database to sort the local search results generated at each seller database in response to the search query such that the sorted local search results are pre-sorted prior to being communicated to the one or more computer systems;  
and

computer-implemented means for receiving sorted local search results from one or more of the seller databases, the sorted local search results having been pre-sorted by the one or more seller databases prior to being communicated to the one or more computer systems;

if the received sorted local search results comprise sorted local search results received from more than one of the seller databases:

computer-implemented means ~~for~~ for merging the sorted local search results received from the seller databases to generate merged search results; ~~and~~

computer-implemented means for sorting the merged search results according to the sorting parameters; and

computer-implemented means for communicating the sorted merged search results to a user; and

computer-implemented means for, if the received sorted local search results comprise sorted local search results received from a single one of the seller databases, communicating the sorted local search results received from the single one of the seller databases to a user.

23. (Currently Amended) ~~An~~ A computer-implemented electronic commerce system comprising ~~a server operating on one or more computers and~~ computer systems each comprising one or more processing units and one or more memory units, the one or more computer systems operable to:

communicate a search query for one or more products to ~~one or more~~ a plurality of seller databases that contain product data, each seller database operable to generate local search results responsive to the search query;

communicate one or more sorting parameters to the plurality of seller databases, the sorting parameters directing each seller database to sort the local search results generated at each seller database in response to the search query such that the sorted local search results are pre-sorted prior to being communicated to the one or more computer systems, the sorting parameters further directing each seller database to initially communicate no more than a specified number of sorted local search results in response to the search query and directing the server to initially communicate no more than ~~the~~ a specified number of merged search results to the user;

receive sorted local search results from ~~one~~ two or more of the plurality of seller databases, the sorted local search results having been pre-sorted by the two or more seller databases prior to being communicated to the one or more computer systems;

merge the sorted local search results received from the two or more seller databases to generate merged search results, the number of merged search results being less than or equal to the product of the specified number and the number of seller databases to which the search query is communicated;

sort the merged search results according to the sorting parameters;

initially communicate no more than the specified number of sorted merged search results to a user;

receive a request for additional search results from the user;

determine that all of the sorted merged search results have been communicated to the user;

request additional sorted local search results from the plurality of seller databases;

receive no more than the specified number of additional sorted local search results from ~~one~~ two or more of the seller databases, the sorted local search results having been pre-sorted by the two or more seller databases prior to being communicated to the one or more computer systems, the sorting parameters directing that each seller database communicate no more than the specified number of sorted local search results at a time;



merge the additional sorted local search results received from the two or more seller databases to generate additional merged search results, the number of merged search results being less than or equal to the product of the specified number and the number of seller databases to which the search query is communicated;

sort the additional merged search results according to the sorting parameters; and  
communicate the additional sorted merged search results to the user.

24. (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method for processing search results in an electronic commerce system, the method performed using one or more computer systems each comprising one or more processing units and one or more memory units, the method comprising:

using the one or more computer systems, communicating a search query for one or more products to ~~one or more~~ a plurality of seller databases that contain product data, each seller database operable to generate local search results responsive to the search query;

using the one or more computer systems, communicating one or more sorting parameters to the plurality of seller databases, the sorting parameters directing each seller database to sort the local search results generated at each seller database in response to the search query such that the sorted local search results are pre-sorted prior to being communicated to the one or more computer systems, the sorting parameters further directing each seller database to initially communicate no more than a specified number of sorted local search results in response to the search query and directing that no more than ~~the~~ a specified number of merged search results to be initially communicated to the user;

using the one or more computer systems, receiving sorted local search results from ~~one~~ two or more of the plurality of seller databases, the sorted local search results having been pre-sorted by the two or more seller databases prior to being communicated to the one or more computer systems;

using the one or more computer systems, merging the sorted local search results received from the two or more seller databases to generate merged search results, the number of merged search results being less than or equal to the product of the specified number and the number of seller databases to which the search query is communicated;

using the one or more computer systems, sorting the merged search results according to the sorting parameters;

using the one or more computer systems, initially communicating no more than the specified number of sorted merged search results to a user;

using the one or more computer systems, receiving a request for additional search results from the user;

using the one or more computer systems, determining that all of the sorted merged search results have been communicated to the user;

using the one or more computer systems, requesting additional sorted local search results from the plurality of seller databases;

using the one or more computer systems, receiving no more than the specified number of additional sorted local search results from ~~one~~ two or more of the seller databases, the sorted local search results having been pre-sorted by the two or more seller databases prior to being communicated to the one or more computer systems, the sorting parameters directing that each seller database communicate no more than the specified number of sorted local search results at a time;

using the one or more computer systems, merging the additional sorted local search results received from the two or more seller databases to generate additional merged search results, the number of merged search results being less than or equal to the product of the specified number and the number of seller databases to which the search query is communicated;

using the one or more computer systems, sorting the additional merged search results according to the sorting parameters; and

using the one or more computer systems, communicating the additional sorted merged search results to the user.

25. (Currently Amended) Software for processing search results in an electronic commerce system, the software embodied in a computer-readable medium and when executed operable to:

communicate a search query for one or more products to ~~one or more~~ a plurality of seller databases that contain product data, each seller database operable to generate local search results responsive to the search query;

communicate one or more sorting parameters to the seller databases, the sorting parameters directing each seller database to sort the local search results generated at each seller database in response to the search query such that the sorted local search results are pre-sorted prior to being communicated to the one or more computer systems, the sorting parameters further directing each seller database to initially communicate no more than a specified number of sorted local search results in response to the search query and directing that no more than ~~the~~ a specified number of merged search results to be initially communicated to the user;

receive sorted local search results from ~~one~~ two or more of the seller databases, the sorted local search results having been pre-sorted by the two or more seller databases prior to being communicated to the one or more computer systems;

merge the sorted local search results received from the two or more seller databases to generate merged search results, the number of merged search results being less than or equal to the product of the specified number and the number of seller databases to which the search query is communicated;

sort the merged search results according to the sorting parameters;

initially communicate no more than the specified number of sorted merged search results to a user;

receive a request for additional search results from the user;

determine that all of the sorted merged search results have been communicated to the user;

request additional sorted local search results from the plurality of seller databases;

receive no more than the specified number of additional sorted local search results from ~~one~~ two or more of the plurality of seller databases, the sorted local search results having been pre-sorted by the two or more seller databases prior to being communicated to the one or more computer systems, the sorting parameters directing that each seller database communicate no more than the specified number of sorted local search results at a time;

merge the additional sorted local search results received from the two or more seller

databases to generate additional merged search results, the number of merged search results being less than or equal to the product of the specified number and the number of seller databases to which the search query is communicated;

sort the additional merged search results according to the sorting parameters; and  
communicate the additional sorted merged search results to the user.